



Helping people help themselves

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Since 1969, Los Alamos-based nonprofit [Self Help](#) has provided consultation and advocacy, emergency financial assistance and seed money grants to residents of Los Alamos, northern Santa Fe, Rio Arriba and Taos counties.

“Our mission is to provide support and services as a bridge to self-reliance for people in Northern New Mexico,” says executive director Maura Taylor. “We help our clients meet basic needs and find services for assistance, with the hope that this empowers them and helps them thrive in other ways (such as going back to school or starting a small business, which we can help with through our seed money program).”

Assistance in emergencies

Through grants and private contributions (including support through the Laboratory’s Employee Giving Campaign and from Lab managing contractor Triad National Security, LLC), the organization provides one-time financial assistance with basic needs such as utilities, medicine or rent for those who need help most during emergencies.

Here are just two examples from the more than 900 people who received financial help in 2018: Self Help prevented a utility disconnection for a family of three after a medical emergency put them in difficulties; the organization also paid the rent of a single mother of four who had to quit her job due to a temporary loss of childcare, allowing the family to stay in their home until the mother’s new job started.

Through its program of self-reliance grants, applicants can also receive seed funds to start a small business, begin job training or start other projects that will enhance financial self-reliance.

Self Help also provides help for clients seeking assistance with referrals to the appropriate social, financial or legal services.

Thanks to a grant from United Way of Northern New Mexico, Self Help has initiated an information and referral line accessible toll-free from all cell phones and landlines in the region (dial 2-1-1). The resources can be [accessed online](#).

Nearly 60 percent of the people who received assistance live in Rio Arriba County, 17 percent in Taos County and 15 percent in Los Alamos County. More than 40 percent of the people receiving assistance are children.

An honor to help

“Our clients are the most rewarding part of the work,” says Taylor. “People are so grateful for the help and are often relieved just to have someone there to listen. It’s an honor to help people through difficult times in their lives.”

Through its Los Alamos Mental Health Access project, Self Help also maintains a [website](#) with information on Los Alamos County and statewide mental health information and services.

With only one full-time and one part-time staff member, the organization relies on volunteers, who logged over 800 hours of service in 2018.

“We have plans for a part-time satellite office in Española in order to offer more client services in Rio Arriba County and are also looking to expand our board,” says Taylor.

“And we’re turning 50 this year, so be on the lookout for a birthday party!”

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